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White House Watch Happenings

President Carter concluded his August 4 announcement of his plans to reorganize the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the National Reconnaissance Office and other elements of the colossus known as "the intelligence community" with the confident promise that "these decisions will be embodied in a new executive order ... as an interim measure until appropriate charter legislation can be introduced and enacted by Congress." He and others involved expected then that the executive order would be issued within a fortnight or so. After four months of drafting, redrafting and conflict between interested parties, principally among them Vice President Walter Mondale, Director of Central Intelligence Stansfield Turner, and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, the order was under final review on December 7 by the President's deputy assistant for national security affairs, David Aaron, and just about ready for submission to Carter. Its history, like that of other items to be noted in this report, provides some insight into the way the Carter White House works in specific and often difficult situations.

Listing Mondale among the intelligence combatants may be a slight distortion. His first concern in the early stages was to minimize and when possible to conceal the jurisdictional conflict between Admiral Turner, to whom Carter in principle had granted authority over budgeting and resource allocation for all of the major intelligence agencies, civilian and military and of course including his own CIA, and Secretary Brown, to whom Carter left operational control of the military agencies. Turner and Harold Brown, who got his early Pentagon training under Robert McNamara when McNamara was teaching everybody within his reach, including Presidents John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, what civilian control of the military by a strong Secretary of Defense really meant, are implacable defenders and expanders of their respective turfs. During the preparation of the President's August statement and, even more fiercely, during the battle over the order that would implement the statement, Turner fought to maximize and Brown to minimize the grant of money power to Turner as DCI. Once that struggle was over, and it appears to have been resolved amicably, Mondale concerned himself mostly with sharpening, tightening and clarifying the executive order's restrictions upon what the various agencies might and might not be allowed to do in surveillance, covert operation and other activities that all too often had disgraced "the community" and

brought him into some conflict with both Turner and Brown and their insistence, not upon freedom to be dirty, but upon their operational discretion. The Vice President had the assistance of two former associates and collaborators: David Aaron and Frederick A.O. Schwarz, Jr., who had been on the staff of Senator Frank Church's intelligence investigating committee when Senator Mondale was a ranking Democratic member and, during Church's abortive bid for the 1976 presidential nomination, the effective chairman. Schwarz, who returned to a New York law practice, has donated a lot of his time and expertise to Mondale. Aaron's immediate superior, national security assistant Zbigniew Brzezinski, oversaw a preliminary National Security Council study of the intelligence system for Carter and has sat with the President, Mondale and Turner at a weekly White House review of the whole foreign intelligence operation. But he delegated NSC oversight of the intelligence executive order largely to Aaron and, as we shall see, assigned at least one other matter so completely to Aaron that Brzezinski didn't know what was going on in his own back yard.

All the while the permanent successor to the Church-Mondale committee, the Senate Committee on Intelligence under Daniel K. Inouye of Hawaii, and a subcommittee under Walter Huddleston of Kentucky, were working out legislation that to a considerable extent will eventually supersede the executive order. Carter's August division of authority between Turner and Brown was a fundamental change, cleared in advance with the Huddleston subcommittee, and the legislation yet to come from the whole committee probably will leave it pretty much intact. The crucial question is to what extent the pending executive order and the final legislation, as written by the Inouye committee and put through the Senate-House grinder, will complement each other and to what extent the legislation will preserve, negate or neutralize the oversight control so prayerfully nurtured by Mondale. Apart from the reallocation of top authority and the tightened controls, in fact, the Carter package actually constitutes a lot of tinkering and relatively little basic change in the intelligence reorganization instituted by Gerald Ford on February 17, 1976. Much of the hassling over the executive order amounts to more tinkering. Carter, never one to understate the changes he proposes and brings about, won't be emphasizing this aspect of the business, that's for sure.

John Osborne